



Road to 1717

**November 12, 2018**

Dear Friends of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School,

Cristo Rey students begin every school day in "House."

Freshmen are assigned to one of 24 Houses at the beginning of their Cristo Rey experience and they stay in the same House for all four years. A House includes freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors – about 20 students in each one. House makes the Cristo Rey community smaller, more intimate and more accessible, especially for the younger students.

Daymara Acevedo is a senior and Captain of the House of Humility. She says that, "... House was a good way for me to connect with older students when I was new. I learned my way around: classes, teachers, clubs, etc. and now, House is a good way for me to help new students begin."



If you stop in to observe House (visitors are always welcome) you might think that not much is really happening – but you would be wrong. "House is a place to meet students that I wouldn't otherwise know," says Tyrique Mack-Georges, Captain of the House of Unity. "We take care of each other in the House of Insight. It is about creating a family," adds House Captain Michaelah Kirby.

Each House is led by a senior House Captain. Captains plan and manage what happens in House on their own. New Captains are appointed by the Captain from the previous year because they see leadership qualities in their peer.

House Captains receive leadership training during the summer preceding their senior year. Nadiyah Williams, Captain of the House of Valor, says, "Being a House Captain is a commitment. It's my job as a leader to encourage my peers to open up with each other. I ask everyone to put their phones aside because House is bonding time."



House Captains 2018-2019

The House Program also helps with culture building: House Captains announce the awards at Honors Convocations; they lead retreats and counseling sessions during Prep for Success Bootcamp; Houses have friendly competitions during spirit week and other events. Most importantly, House creates real and challenging leadership opportunities for 24 seniors.

Rich Pugh, Assistant Principal for Student Life, coordinates the House Program, and faculty advisors offer coaching, but the student Captains are the real leaders of the House Program.

The assignment of genuine leadership to the Captains is an interesting challenge for our faculty and staff who are otherwise wired to manage every detail of the school themselves. The students enjoy the responsibilities of leadership, but struggle sometimes when things go awry. Adults are proud to watch the students lead, but are tempted to meddle when they anticipate problems. These conflicting tensions produce a dynamic culture of challenge and growth for everyone.

An example: This year, adults decided to shift 11 minutes in the daily schedule from morning House to lunch time. House Captains felt excluded from the decision that affected their domain. Not surprisingly, the Captains don't like the change and they object to the decision-making process. So, the dialogue begins to find a suitable compromise. Great practice for real life!

Everyone in the Cristo Rey community is learning all the time. We are excited by the potential of the House Program to help all of us learn and grow.

Sincerely,

John McConnell  
Founder and President



Watch Cristo Rey Philadelphia on CBS Philly for Instant Decision Day, where six local partner universities come to the school to interview senior students and make a college acceptance decision on the spot!

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#### **Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School**

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